

California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
Strategic Action Proposal
Draft 9-12-06

The San Joaquin Valley: California's 21st Century Opportunity

Section III.
Overview and Background

The San Joaquin Valley Today – The Challenge

The San Joaquin Valley, from Stockton to Bakersfield, is well known as an agricultural powerhouse, with \$20 billion in agricultural value earned annually in the eight-county region. The Valley is one of few places on the face of the earth that combine the climate, soil and water that enable hundreds of different crops to grow profitably. Seven of the nation's top ten agricultural counties are located in this fertile valley, making the vitality of this industry a state and national priority.

The San Joaquin Valley is also a gateway to three world-class national parks and the home to important natural resources—oil and natural gas fields, vast wetlands, and unique plant and animal communities—all bordered by a system of rivers that drain the Sierra and join the San Joaquin River as it flows through the region and connects to the Bay Delta Estuary. Living within the unique agricultural and natural resources of the region are more than 3.4 million people, who live in 62 cities: large and small, rich and not so rich, old and new—each providing a unique quality of life and authentic attractiveness for its residents.

The region is undergoing rapid transformation as the population continues to grow, and the demographics of the region change. Once a largely rural area, the eight counties of the Valley, linked by Highway 99, are now home to large metropolitan areas (Stockton, Fresno and Bakersfield) and growing cities and towns of every size. Population growth is driven primarily by migration. Almost 60 percent of the San Joaquin Valley's growth since 2000 has been due to migration, with the remainder attributable to natural increase (the excess of births over deaths). There are important distinctions between the Northern San Joaquin Valley and the Southern San Joaquin Valley. In the north, migration accounts for almost two-thirds of the growth. A majority of those migrants (70 percent) are from other parts of the United States and California, mostly the Bay Area, and the remainder are international migrants. In the south, natural increase accounts for almost half of the growth, and international migration is about equal in size to domestic migration. Most of the international migrants are from Mexico, are young, and tend to have more children than other residents.

Although the San Joaquin Valley is recognized worldwide as an agricultural giant and is one of the fastest growing regions in the nation, it is also one of the most challenged.

The San Joaquin Valley currently under-performs the rest of the California:

- Average per capita incomes are 32.2% lower.
- High school graduation rates are on average 2% lower.
- College attendance is consistently 50% below the average.
- Violent crime is 24% higher.
- Access to healthcare is 31% lower (based on the number of primary care physicians serving the population).

Historically, the Valley has been overshadowed by other regions as the defining emblems of California, and therefore overlooked by State and federal policy makers. While many of the cities and towns of the region are evolving with new subdivisions and shopping centers, there is another side to Valley life, defined by poverty, environmental degradation, and social separation. Only in the last decade, as the population has grown, and performance comparisons have been made on a regional basis, has the San Joaquin Valley, and its significant under-performance, been acknowledged and addressed.

Further, in spite of the current under-performance in the San Joaquin Valley, people from other parts of the state, the nation, and around the world continue to arrive to find opportunity, housing and a chance for a better life. The region's growth demands attention—infrastructure, schools, transportation, quality environment—that have to be provided for an increasing population. The region offers great hope and promise for the future, with much of the state's projected population growth likely to occur in the Valley.

The region can no longer be ignored. Changes in the San Joaquin Valley will affect and be affected by the rest of California and the world.

If the promise of the eight-county region is to be achieved, then the first order of business must be to reduce the existing disparity between the San Joaquin Valley and the rest of the state, increase the capacity of the region to address its own shortcomings, and strengthen the performance upon which future prosperity can be built.

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley has set about to address the challenges of the region, to craft innovative approaches to tackle economic, environmental, and social issues, and to position the region to achieve the greatness to which it aspires.

The Promise of the San Joaquin Valley

San Francisco came onto the world stage in the 19th century with the discovery of gold in California, and Los Angeles, with Klieg lights and the Hollywood hillside sign, became the 20th Century icon.

The San Joaquin Valley is California's 21st Century opportunity.

Building new cities and schools, roads and factories, airports and parks, the Valley offers the opportunity to create a new model—to purposefully not re-create what has been done before, but to do it differently. There exists a unique opportunity to provide a world-class region with a diversified economy, a healthy environment, and a high quality of life for all.

The future of the San Joaquin Valley is an opportunity to build on the region's strengths in order to pioneer a frontier of innovation:

- An opportunity to develop cutting-edge, state-of-the-art, renewable energy systems to support communities and industries on every level.
- An opportunity to provide mobility for people and commerce in new ways.
- An opportunity to craft a new model for development that co-exists with sustainable agriculture and a healthy environment that includes clean air and plentiful, clean water.
- An opportunity to build a world-class economy that engages a diverse population to connect to the global marketplace.
- An opportunity to tap the talent and creativity of its people to foster vibrant communities and exciting cultural activities.

Realizing the promise of this vast area and capturing its benefits requires a focused and coordinated effort. The region must address the under-performance that currently exists and reverse the existing economic, environmental and social challenges related to educational achievement, economic performance and health, including air quality.

Recognizing both the enormous potential of this great region and the current challenges that limit its accomplishment, Governor Schwarzenegger formed the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley in June of 2005. Its purpose is to focus resources, attention and energy to ensure that the eight county area coordinates and leverages its own resources while creating new ones, and undertakes the actions that will reverse the current deficits of the region. The goal of this unprecedented effort is to unite the region and create new assets to ensure a successful future for the San Joaquin Valley and for all of California.

Vision for the San Joaquin Valley

Recognizing that the San Joaquin Valley is California's 21st Century Opportunity, the Partnership enthusiastically embraces this vision:

The San Joaquin Valley will be a cohesive region composed of unique communities and a diverse population that is supported by a vibrant economy built on competitive strengths and sufficient resources to provide a high quality of life for all residents now and in the future. This vision can best be achieved through public-private collaboration integrating actions and investments into a coherent strategy that commits immediate and sustained leadership to accomplishing specific objectives that moves towards accomplishing long-term goals.

This vision will be achieved through coordinated actions to:

- *Implement creative and collaborative solutions to region-wide infrastructure challenges, focusing on the growth of target industries with comparative advantages, and promoting the region as a business and tourist destination. (Economic Development)*
- *Develop the workforce preparation infrastructure to support sustained, long-term economic vitality. (Higher Education and Workforce Development)*
- *Implement policies and programs through public-private partnerships to ensure equal access to educational opportunities and resources for all children that will improve academic performance. (K-12 Education)*
- *Build innovative transportation systems to increase travel choices and improve mobility, regional and state goods movement, air quality, and economic prosperity. (Transportation)*
- *Support and promote regional consensus through the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint Plan process that identifies appropriate areas for social and economic development, contributing to the conservation of prime agricultural land and natural resources, and to the sustainability of the region. (Land Use, Housing, and Agriculture)*
- *Enable residents to enjoy healthy air by removing the adverse impacts of poor air quality and improving the quality of life. (Air Quality)*

- *Ensure a reliable, adequate quality water supply to sustain a high quality of life, and a world-class agricultural sector, while protecting and enhancing the environment.* (Water Quality, Supply and Reliability)
- *Promote environmentally-friendly renewable and alternative energy sources to ensure an adequate reliable supply.* (Energy)
- *Provide timely access to necessary health care and social services and by supporting healthy lifestyles and safe, nurturing communities.* (Health and Human Services)
- *Facilitate the deployment and utilization of advanced communications services throughout the region.* (Telecommunications)

A Plan of Action – Public Accountability for Accomplishment

The above vision will be achieved and the actions will be accomplished through implementation of this Strategic Action Proposal which sets forth overall strategies, goals, objectives and specific actions with accompanying metrics and indicators to measure progress. This Strategic Action Proposal also recommends an organizational structure to lead and oversee implementation.

In order to most easily measure progress and report to the public, the Partnership Board identified key primary indicators of well-being for Valley residents which will be tracked and reported to policy makers and the public in an Annual Report. The following shows the implied goal in the indicator:

- ↑ Per Capita Income
- ↑ Median Household Income
- ↓ Unemployment
- ↓ Percent Families Below Poverty Line
- ↑ High School Graduation Rates
- ↑ College Graduation Rates
- ↓ Number of Days with 8-Hour Ozone Exceedances
- ↑ Land Use Efficiency (Population / Acre Incorporated Land)
- Acres in Agriculture Production
- ↑ Transportation Mobility (metric being developed by Caltrans)
- ↓ Per Capita Energy Use
- ↓ Per Capita Water Consumption
- ↑ Access to Primary Care Physicians and Allied Health Professionals
- ↓ Asthma Rates
- ↓ Violent Crime Rates

These metrics and indicators are not meant to be exhaustive. They serve as surrogates for much more complicated data that measure quality of life in several aspects. The Work Group detailed recommendations articulate additional metrics and indicators for the specific policy focus. However, annually tracking and reporting the status of these indicators will provide public accountability and essential feedback to the Partnership to adjust course if necessary to achieve the vision.

High-Level Indicators with Graphics

The following set of graphs display the current San Joaquin Valley performance (with baseline trends from 2000), as well as the goals for improvement over the next ten years. The graphs also display comparative data for California and other regions where relevant. This format will make it easy for policy makers and the public to see “at-a-glance” the state of the region.

The following graphs report on these indicators:

- ❑ Violent Crime Rates
- ❑ Average Unemployment Rate
- ❑ Average Per Capita Income
- ❑ Median Household Income
- ❑ Three Year High School Graduation Rates
- ❑ Percentage of Population Obtaining Bachelor's Degree or Beyond
- ❑ Number of Days that Exceed Eight-Hour State Standards for Ozone levels
- ❑ Per Capita Water Consumption
- ❑ Number of Primary Care Physicians
- ❑ Percentage of Population Reporting Asthma
- ❑ San Joaquin Valley Acres in Agricultural Production
- ❑ People per Urbanized Acre

Note: When the goal is for the Valley to achieve statewide averages, it is important to keep in mind that future state levels are unknown at the present time. In those cases, it should be assumed that the San Joaquin Valley performance should reach the state levels as they will exist in the future.